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ABSTRACT

In the present study, differences between a group of 69 Arts and Sciences freshmen who participated in a 1-year living-learning residence hall program, and 76 students in a matched control group were evaluated. The LL students, when compared with the control group, were better satisfied with the faculty, thought the campus atmosphere was more scholarly, and cut class less frequently, although their attitude toward studying seemed more relaxed. In addition, the LL students appeared to be developing cultural and political interests more rapidly than the control. The transition between high school and college was made easier for students in the program by the supportive atmosphere and few of them complained about alienation or loss of identity. For the students who completed the academic year, the average difference between predicted and achieved grades was the same for both groups. Among the students, dropped for academic reasons, under-achievement was greater than the control group. (Author/HS)

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An Evaluation of a Living-Learning Residence Hall Program

Carol Pemberton

Impact Study

University of Delaware

A relatively new phenomenon at many large universities is the living-learning residence hall. Such a unit usually consists of living quarters for men, living quarters for women, a central area containing dining and recreational facilities for both sexes, classrooms, faculty and administrative offices, and possibly science laboratories, an auditorium and a library (Centra, 1967). Obviously such an arrangement is convenient for students, particularly on a large campus, where transportation from one classroom building to another becomes more of a problem, as distances between them increase. The administrators of such programs hope that, besides providing convenience, the living-learning experience will enhance the cultural and intellectual life of the participants. Furthermore, they hope that the personal and cohesive atmosphere provided may aid in combating the alienation so often felt by students in this day of mass education.

A small living-learning program, using two classrooms, a seminar room and four offices in the basement of one of the dormitory complexes at the University of Delaware was operated on a trial basis during the 1967-1968 academic year. The success of this program was evaluated mainly by comparing subjective data concerning the students' perceptions of their environment, with data supplied by a control group also living in University residence halls, but attending all classes on campus.

Sample

Invitations were sent to 140 entering freshmen who had been admitted to the College of Arts and Science by the beginning of June, 1967. These students all planned to live in residence. They were selected by taking every third name from an alphabetical list. Separate lists for men and women were used, so that the sex proportion would be the same as for the Arts and Science class as a whole. Acceptances were received from 92 of these students, who constituted the members of the living-learning program.

The 92 living-learning participants were matched as closely as possible in terms of their Verbal and Math CEEB scores and high school rank in class with 92 Arts and Science freshmen who were accepted by the University prior to June 1967 and were also planning to live on campus. An additional 34 persons, representing as wide a range of ability as possible, were included in the control group to compensate for anticipated attrition. Of the 126 people invited, 109 presented themselves for the first testing session.

Procedure

The living-learning students all had single rooms in the same residence hall complex, and they took from one to four of their freshman courses in classrooms located in the basement of this building. Two semesters each were offered in freshman English, German and History, and one semester each of introductory Sociology and Psychology. There were two English instructors, and one each for the other subjects. Each instructor was provided with a small office adjacent to the classrooms while teaching in the program, but also maintained the use of his

regular office on campus. All students in the program were enrolled in English, about 75% in History, 30% in Sociology or Psychology and 25% in German, so that on the average they took slightly over half their credit hours in the living-learning program.

The Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values (AVL) and the College Student Questionnaires (CSQ) - Part 1 were administered to the living-learning (LL) students and the control group during orientation week in September, 1967. During April, 1968 the AVL was readministered, together with CSQ-2, the College and University Environment Scales (CUES) and a questionnaire devised for this study, referred to as the Impact Study Questionnaire (ISQ). Both sets of questionnaires were completed by 69 (75%) of the LL students, and by 76 of the control, which is 70% of the 109 persons tested during orientation week. All questionnaire data are based on the replies of these 145 students.

During the middle of April six hour-long discussion sessions were held with the living-learning freshmen. Not more than fourteen people came to any one session, and about 60 students participated.

Results

Grades

Of the LL group 93% completed two semesters at the University and achieved a mean grade point average (GPA) of 2.44, which was +.03 higher than that predicted. The average number of quality points earned was 80. For the control 92% completed two semesters, earned an average of 81 quality points, and a mean GPA of 2.49. Their GPA was also +.03 higher than predicted.

The performance of those students who were dropped for academic reasons or withdrew failing during the year, shows that the discrepancy between predicted and actual grades was -.85 for the LL students, and -1.22 for the control students. Therefore, although the discrepancy between predicted and actual grades for those completing a full academic year was identical for the two groups, the grades for those who dropped out of school for academic reasons, would indicate that the living-learning experience may have been instrumental in preventing extreme cases of under-achievement.

College Student Questionnaires

CSQ-1 is designed for administration to entering freshmen prior to the beginning of the academic year. It contains sections dealing with (I) educational and vocational plans and expectations, (II) activities, achievements and perceptions during secondary school, (III) family background, and (IV) personal attitudes. Five scales attempting to measure Family Independence, Peer Independence, Liberalism, Social Conscience, and Cultural Sophistication are derived from Section IV.

There are three sections in CSQ-2, I and III duplicating I and IV of CSQ-1. Section II contains questions which deal with college activities, and yields six scale scores, named: Satisfaction with Faculty, Satisfaction with Administration, Satisfaction with Major, Satisfaction with Students, Study Habits, and Extracurricular Involvement.

The only scale on which there was a significant difference between the LL students and the control was Satisfaction with Faculty. The average score for LL students was 25.46, for the control 24.36, a difference significant at the .07 level. For the scales that were common

to both CSQ-1 and CSQ-2, there is some indication that LL students were making more rapid gains in Cultural Sophistication than the control, and smaller gains in Peer Independence.

An analysis of the responses to each individual item on CSQ-2 was carried out. Four-fold tables were prepared, usually by combining response alternatives 1 and 2, and alternatives 3 and 4. From these chi squares were calculated to test the significance of the difference in response between the LL students and the control. All items for which the chi square was significant at the .10 level or better are listed in Table 1, and the wording of the item indicates how the response alternatives were combined. If the item also appeared on CSQ-1 it was treated in the same way, tabulating the responses for only those students who had taken both forms of the test. This indicates whether a difference between the two groups was present initially, or whether it could be attributed to differences in the college environment.

Insert Table I

Table I shows that more living-learning students felt that their teachers were successful in challenging them to their capacity; knew them by name; were genuinely interested in student problems; and accepted and welcomed student dissent. The University, they felt, was interested in them as individuals.

During orientation week the students planned to see their parents less frequently than they actually did, and there was no significant difference between the two groups. In April, LL students reported that they had seen their parents less frequently than the control. In spite

of this, more of them felt they were growing closer to their families. Perhaps their closer relationship with teachers and peers generalized to their feelings about parents and siblings. At the end of the year, more LL students than control students stated that they normally consulted with close friends while in the process of making some important decision.

On the first administration of CSQ three-fourths of both groups anticipated participating in student government organizations. On the second administration only 8% of the control group and 22% of the experimental group reported having done so. Although these percentages were low for both groups, significantly more living-learning students took part in such organizations, even though they lived further from the center of campus.

On CSQ-1 one-fifth of each group thought that their biggest problem during the coming year would be: "trying to 'find' myself in the sense of personal meaning and identity, where I am headed, what I am seeking in life, etc." On CSQ-2 only 17% of the LL students stated that this had been their greatest worry, compared with 34% of the control.

On both forms of CSQ the student is asked to rank four statements according to the accuracy with which each portrays his reason for being in college. The four orientations are described in short paragraphs on the questionnaires, but not named. They are referred to in the manual as the Vocational, the Academic, the Collegiate, and the Nonconformist philosophies (Peterson, 1965).

The percentages of LL and control students who endorsed each philosophy as entering freshmen, and towards the end of their first academic year are shown in Table 2. These results are for those individuals who took both forms of the questionnaire.

Insert Table 2

Using CSQ-1 figures as expected frequencies, chi square shows that change significant at the .001 level occurred between the two administrations of the inventory. Over 40% of both groups originally endorsed the Collegiate orientation. At the end of the year just over half of the LL students endorsed this orientation, but there was a slight drop for the control. More members of the control than the LL group originally claimed to be Academically oriented. On the second administration there was a drop of 19 in this percentage, the Vocational and Nonconformist categories gaining. In the LL group the Academic percentage remained almost unchanged, whereas the Vocational dropped by 10%, and the Nonconformist increased by 5%.

Study of Values

The Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values attempts to measure the relative prominence of six basic interests: Theoretical, Economic, Aesthetic, Social, Political, and Religious. Because of marked sex differences in the values of men and women, results have been treated separately for each sex.

It has been found previously (Lane & Pemberton, 1965) that between the freshman and senior year at the University of Delaware there is an increase in the Aesthetic score and a decrease in the Religious. It was hypothesized that the Aesthetic score would rise and the Religious score decline more rapidly for the LL students than for the control. The most significant score change ($p = .01$) occurred for LL women on Aesthetic values, which rose 3.1 points. The control women's Aesthetic score increased by 2.5 points during the same period ($p = .10$). For the LL men the Aesthetic score went up 2.0 points ($p = .10$), whereas the control men's score went up only 0.9 and the change was not significant. Although the changes were greater for the LL students, than for the control, t-tests failed to show that these differences were significant.

The Religious score dropped by 1.3 points for LL women and by 1.2 points for LL men, compared with 0.4 points for the control women, and 0.7 points for the control men. Again these differences were in the predicted direction, but not statistically significant.

College and University Environment Scales

The College and University Environment Scales (CUES), devised by Pace (1963) measure the students' perception of the campus environment. The questionnaire contains five scales, empirically derived by factor analysis, entitled Practicality, Community, Awareness, Propriety, and Scholarship. Because our groups were small, conventional test-scoring was used, instead of the consensus method employed for large samples. The scores on the Community and Scholarship scales were both higher for the LL students than for the control ($p = .06$ for both scales).

The Community scale describes a friendly, cohesive, group-oriented environment, which is supportive and sympathetic. The Scholarship scale characterizes an atmosphere in which the pursuit of knowledge and theories, scientific or philosophical, is carried on vigorously. Intellectual speculation, an interest in knowledge for its own sake, and intellectual discipline are characteristic. The score for the Propriety scale was exactly the same for both groups, for Practicality the control scored slightly higher, and for Awareness a slightly higher score was made by the LL students.

Individual CUES items which differentiated LL students from the control appear in Table 3. The atmosphere which prevailed in the living-learning program can be depicted from these items. More LL students believed that learning what is in the text book was not enough to pass most courses; that professors really pushed students' capacities to the limit; that class discussions were typically vigorous and intense; that professors usually did not take attendance in class; and that a lecture by an outstanding scientist or literary critic would be well attended. However, fewer LL students believed that courses, examinations and readings were frequently revised. There seemed to be a more relaxed attitude towards studying among the LL group. More of them stated that there was little studying done over weekends, and more of them were likely to regard students who worked hard for grades as odd.

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Insert Table 3

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Among the LL students a higher proportion shared their problems with each other, and ran errands or did personal services for the faculty. More of them believed that the school helped everyone get

acquainted, fewer thought that the important people at the University expected others to show proper respect for them. A larger proportion of them believed that students adapted themselves to others, rather than expecting others to adapt to them. Similarly, more LL students reject the idea that knowing the right people on the faculty or administration get one a better break at this University. However, fewer LL students felt that channels for expressing student complaints were readily accessible.

Greater political involvement seemed to be characteristic of the LL students. Compared with the control, more of them stated that student elections generated strong feelings; that students were actively concerned about national and international affairs; and that students here learned that they were not only expected to develop ideals but also to express them in action.

Impact Study Questionnaire

Significant differences between the LL students and the control were found on 7 of the 20 objective questions on this inventory. LL students had been to see an instructor more frequently about non-academic matters outside of class. They participated to a greater extent in living-unit activities, and cut class less frequently. Almost all of the LL students (86%) said they would enroll in a similar program again. Only 26% of the control said that they would enroll in such a program, if given the opportunity.

Contrary to expectation, fewer LL students had been invited to a faculty member's home. Also, fewer thought the atmosphere in the dormitory was conducive to good study. From the discussion sessions it

was found that this was due to poor sound-proofing, not to the behavior of fellow-students. The isolated location of this residence complex accounted for the fact that more LL students thought that they would have attended a larger number of extracurricular events if they had lived in a different dormitory.

When asked what aspects of their freshman year they liked least, fewer LL than control students mentioned courses, the faculty, academic pressures, extracurricular activities, or their fellow students. None of them mentioned a feeling of "loss of identity," but 5% of the control group did.

Discussion Sessions

From the discussion sessions it was apparent that the majority of students believed the living-learning program had made the transition from high school to college easier. They emphasized the fact that class discussions were more successful in the living-learning program than on campus, since everyone knew each other so well that they were not embarrassed to express their opinions.

Students felt that the actual teaching techniques used were not greatly different from those used on campus. In spite of the greater availability of the instructors, students expressed reticence about consulting any professor unless they have a serious problem.

Discussion

From the results it would appear that students in the living-learning program did perceive their college environment differently from a matched control group. They were better satisfied with the faculty and regarded the atmosphere as more scholarly. One of the

concerns of those involved in planning the living-learning program, was that "the fun has so often been taken out of learning" at the typical university of today. The more relaxed attitude towards studying and grade-making revealed by the living-learning students points to the achievement of one of the goals of the program.

The cultural life of the living-learning students seems to have been enhanced, as they showed signs of having made more rapid gains in cultural sophistication and the development of aesthetic values than the control group. They also showed greater political awareness and interest.

The percentage of students adhering to the vocational orientation towards college decreased among the living-learning students, but increased among the control. Academically the records for those students who completed a full academic year were almost identical for the experimental and the control groups. However, an examination of the discrepancy between predicted and achieved grades for those students who were dropped for academic reasons during the year, indicates that the control students who were dropped under-achieved to a greater extent than the living-learning academic casualties.

The transition from high school to college was made easier by the living-learning program, due to the friendly, cohesive and supportive atmosphere. Feelings of alienation and loss of identity appear to have been minimized.

MAR 6 1969

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Table I

CSQ-2 Items which Differentiated LL Students from the Control Group[1]

Item	CSQ-1 LL %	CSQ-1 Cont.%	CSQ-1 p	CSQ-2 LL %	CSQ-2 Cont.%	CSQ-2 p
Definitely or probably expect to do graduate work	72	58	.10	65	49	.05
Expected expenditure more than $1,900 for year	41	39	-	54	37	.05
No participation in student government organizations (anticipated participation, question 36, CSQ-1)	26	25	-	78	92	.025
Greatest problem achieving sense of identity (anticipated problem CSQ-1)	22	21	-	17	34	.025
Live alone	-	-		88	26	.001
Several or almost all instructors have been quite successful in challenging informant to capacity	-	-		43	25	.025
More than half of instructors know informant by name	-	-		61	44	.05
Over half faculty genuinely interested in students' problems	-	-		55	41	.10
Instructors accept or welcome student dissent	-	-		81	69	.10
Seldom or never aware college interested in me as individual	-	-		62	84	.005
Studied less than most of classmates	49	46	-	54	39	.10

Table 1 continued

Item	CSQ-1 LL %	CSQ-1 Cont.%	CSQ-1 p	CSQ-2 LL %	CSQ-2 Cont.%	CSQ-2 p
Quite a bit or a great deal of importance attached to getting good grades	74	67	-	75	59	.05
Somewhat or very dissatisfied with recent grades (senior h.s. grades for CSQ-1)	33	36	-	60	44	.10
Too many students on campus are too intellectual	-	-		41	25	.05
Very satisfied with proportions male and female students on campus	-	-		30	51	.025
Have adequate personal philosophy or religious faith	78	58	.05	75	57	.05
Plan to see parents once a week or more often	12	15	-	22	37	.05
Growing closer to family during past year	48	39	-	58	39	.025
Almost always or usually consult close friends about important decisions	66	64	-	70	56	.10
Have read none or only one of: James Joyce, Leo Tolstoy, Thomas Mann	66	84	.025	39	55	.10
Own more than 30 books	42	28	.10	48	33	.10

[1] If the item occurred on CSQ-1, the responses made by the same students in September, 1967 are shown.

Table 2

Change in Orientation towards College
between Beginning and End of Academic Year

Orientation	West %		Control %	
	CSO-1	CSO-2	CSO-1	CSO-2
Vocational	33	23	16	21
Academic	13	12	33	14
Collegiate	48	51	45	42
Nonconformist	4	9	7	17
Omitted	1	6	0	5

Table 3

Items from CUES which differentiated LL Students from the Control

Item[1]	% LL	% Control	p
Practicality			
Campus buildings are clearly marked by signs and directories	61	76	.04
New fads and phrases are continually springing up among the students	59	47	.07
Many courses stress the concrete and tangible rather than the speculative or abstract	45	56	.09
Student elections generate a lot of intense campaigning and strong feeling	35	24	.08
Knowing right faculty or administrators gets one better break here	35	24	.08
Important people at this school expect others to show proper respect for them	70	87	.01
Community			
There are definite times each week when dining is made a gracious social event	10	20	.08
Students commonly share their problems	91	84	.09
Students often run errands or do other personal services for the faculty	23	11	.02
The school helps everyone get acquainted	52	39	.06
Resident students must get written permission to be away from the campus overnight	32	16	.01

[1] In order to avoid double negatives, the wording of items keyed to be answered 'False' has been changed, so that agreement always indicates a

Table 3 continued

Item	% LL	% Control	P
Awareness			
A lecture by an outstanding literary critic would be well attended	70	51	.01
Channels for expressing students' complaints are readily accessible	32	48	.02
Students are actively concerned about national and international affairs	74	60	.04
Propriety			
Students here learn that they are not only expected to develop ideals but also to express them in action	52	40	.07
Few students drive sports cars	58	71	.06
Students' publications never lampoon dignified people or institutions	23	08	.01
Instructors clearly explain the goals and purposes of their courses	55	68	.06
Most students use protection against the weather	52	68	.03
Most students adapt themselves to others, rather than expecting other people to adapt to them	45	32	.06

Table 3 continued

Item	% LL	% Control	p
Scholarship			
Learning what is in the text book is not enough to pass most courses	38	19	.01
A lecture by an outstanding scientist would be well attended	65	53	.07
The professors really push the students' capacities to the limit	49	28	.005
Class discussions are typically vigorous and intense	29	16	.03
Students working hard for grades not regarded as odd	73	87	.02
Courses, examinations, and readings are frequently revised	64	79	.02
Students are very serious and purposeful about their work	42	53	.09
Professors usually do not take attendance in class	57	44	.07
There is quite a bit of studying here over week-ends	36	48	.07